

During his recent speech at the National Prayer Breakfast, President Obama asserted something pretty strong: "We can't leave our values at the door."

His next line was powerful, too: "If we leave our values at the door, we abandon much of the moral glue that has held our nation together for centuries."

I agree completely. We cannot leave our values at the door. As a nation, we cannot abandon our "moral glue."

This is why the Obama Administration's decision to force millions of Americans to check their faith at the door is so troubling.

A new mandate from the Department of Health and Human Services would force everyone to pay for drugs and procedures that some Americans consider to be ethically divisive. This new rule tramples the long American tradition of conscience rights. It also seems most perniciously targeted at religious institutions of all kinds, who have for generations been at the front lines of compassionate care for the poorest, most vulnerable, and most isolated. This is wrong. It is unfair. Why would the federal government seek to undermine these extraordinary institutions of care?

To help fix this, I introduced H.R. 1179, the *Respect for Rights of Conscience Act*, in March 2011. Two years ago, in anticipation of the implementation of this mandate, I began working to lay the foundation for Congress to protect the religious liberty and conscience rights of every American who objects to being forced by the strong arm of government to pay for services to which she or he has deeply-held objections. Thankfully there is a strong bipartisan commitment in Congress and strong support from a wide array of leaders and organizations who are directly impacted by this rule.

I have pressed the Speaker of the House of Representatives to take immediate action on this bipartisan bill for the benefit of the millions of Americans who are calling for swift action. Currently, the bill has nearly 180 cosponsors from both parties, including each Nebraska Representative. In the Senate, my friend Senator Roy Blunt is advancing this same legislation,

with nearly 30 cosponsors, also including both Nebraska Senators.

Congress should stand for the rights of conscience and take swift action on the *Respect for Rights of Conscience Act*

. While this ruling is expected to be challenged in the courts, especially in light of the recent Supreme Court ruling unanimously in support of religious liberty, Congress should assert its legislative authority and restore this principle of liberty.

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